



## SUMMARY REPORT

March 20 - 21, 2009

Georgia Center for Continuing Education  
Athens, Georgia



*Facilitator: Gordon Maner*

Carl Vinson Institute of Government

The University of Georgia



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March 22, 2008

Dear Mayor Copenhaver, Mayor Pro-Tem Alvin Mason and District Commissioners, Betty Beard, Corey Johnson, Joe Bowles, Calvin Holland, Sr., Joe Jackson, Jerry Brigham, Jimmy Smith, J.R. Hatney, and Don Grantham, and Administrator Fred Russell,

First of all let me say, this was your best retreat ever! You are beginning to live the title of the book, "Good to Great", with your Commission setting the example and the pace for staff and your employees and all are feeling the old culture of fear and intimidation rapidly fading away and the new culture of servant leadership and service excellence is emerging at a steady pace.

I am truly amazed to see how you all have grown over the last three years; you work better together, you're focusing on the real pressing challenges Augusta faces currently and in the future, your public image is like never before and you all have settled into a maturity of serving which will only allow great things to happen. Your talented management team has truly persevered and steadily taken the reins and you have already seen, in just one year, what can happen when they are allowed to manage the operations and deliver on your highest expectations. You have responded with a new set of goals for the management team and your dedicated employees to work towards over the coming year.

We at the Carl Vinson Institute of Government appreciate the trust you have in the Institute by choosing us to facilitate your retreat. I hope we have the chance to serve you again in the near future. Over the next year, I look forward to hearing of many great leadership and operational strides and lots of good news coming from Augusta.

Should you elect to schedule a 2010 retreat, please have Lena Bonner contact us with a date so we can get it locked in on our master calendar. It would not be too soon to schedule sometime this month for February or March 2010 so that you can get the date of your choice.

Kindest Regards,

Gordon Maner, Manager  
Local Government Programs



## Augusta Commission Retreat Agenda

**March 20 – 21, 2009**

Attending: *Mayor Copenhaver, Mayor Pro-Tem Alvin Mason, and District Commissioners Betty Beard, Corey Johnson, Calvin Holland, Sr, Joe Jackson, Jerry Brigham, Jimmy Smith, J.R. Hatney, and Don Grantham, Administrator Fred Russell, and Facilitator Gordon Maner, Carl Vinson Institute of Government*

### **Friday, March 20, 2009**

12:00 – 1:00	Lunch (Georgia Center Banquet area)
1:00 – 1:30	Welcome, overview, and introductions Review 2008 retreat agreements
1:45 – 3:15	Review the Charter – Where do we need to go with the Charter? What works and what doesn't work? What might we want to change?
3:15 – 3:30	Break
3:30 – 4:15	Re-submitting the Citics of Ethics package
4:15 - 5:00	Long Range Planning – making the commitment ( <i>South Augusta Re-development and others</i> )
7:00	Dinner at Five & Ten

### **Saturday, March 21, 2009**

8:00 – 8:30	Breakfast
9:00 - 10:15	Commissioner issues: prioritize, begin discussions and goal setting
10:15 – 10:30	Break
10:30 – 12:00	Continue issues discussion and goal setting
12:00 - 1:00	Working Lunch (Georgia Center Banquet Area)
1:00 – 3:30	Continue issues discussion and goal setting
3:30 – 4:00	Summary, evaluation and adjourn

## **Issues Discussion and Action**

### **Review the Charter**

(Where do we need to go with the Charter? What works and what doesn't work? What might we want to change?)

#### **Discussion:**

Inefficiencies and looking at internal operations and political processes which slow down initiatives and projects. Spending limits of Administrator. Expressed desires to address needs of the Charter revision. Need to be kept up to date on project status.

#### **Action:**

- Rc-form the Charter Recommendation committee to include the Mayor and Mayor Pro-Tem (add the Attorney to the Committee) to address and make recommendations to Commission for vote related to charter revisions, spending limits of the Administrator and other political and operational inefficiencies

### **DBE and EEO Reporting**

#### **Action:**

#### **Consensus:**

- EEO will report to Mayor (mayor may delegate certain oversight functions to Administrator)
- DBE will report to Administrator
- Draft necessary policy / resolution / charter change to address the consensus of the Commission on these two positions and move forward legally and appropriately

### **Administrator - Commissioner Communication**

(sometimes things I need to don't get to me. Let us know those things we need to know - possible solution; voice mail to all simultaneously with message to call if more info needed)

#### **Discussion:**

Concern that commissioners are not getting adequate information. General communication between Commissioners and with Administrator

#### **Action:**

- Administrator to begin monthly updates of project status and community issues
- Administrator send blast emails to Commissioners as appropriate for immediate incidences
- Initiate Mayor's weekly update to commission on important goings on

## **Re-Submitting the Cities of Ethics package**

### Discussion:

GMA requiring re-submittals as cities elected officials change

### Action:

Move forward and re-submit

## **Long Range Planning – making the commitment**

(South Augusta Re-development and others)

### Discussion:

Need to get moving with long range strategic planning – with areas having a unique character, identity, footprint and feel - not a one size fits all – finally agreement to move forward with every commissioner involved and none left out – protect green spaces and the rural character of south Richmond

### Action:

- In progress with John Shields

## **Reorganize Committee Terms**

(to coincide with election and have pro-tem serve same term as committees)

### Discussion:

Concern for aligning election cycles with committee and pro-tem terms. Needs to go to legislative delegation for home rule. Suggestion to elect pro-tem to two-year terms.

Grantham's proposal summary:

- Odd numbered Commissioners 1, 3, 5, 7, 9 - November '09 for three years
- This would put them in sync with even number seats
- Approved in legislature on 07
- After serving-three year terms, all would go back to the four-year terms
- Allows for commissioners to be elected during major elections
- Lower cost
- Pro-tem elected to two-year term to and appointments to committees coincide with committee assignments
- Mechanism needs to be in place to cover unexpired terms

### Action:

- Charter Recommendation Committee lay out details of the change which will bring order and streamlining to the process and bring recommendation to Commission for study and vote

## **How we tax people in the urban district and the suburban district**

(for basically the same services at different rates)

### Discussion:

Still running two governments and time to change – example of garbage collection. Goal is to collect the same amount of money. Staff concern of how to raise suburban rate to compensate. Needs to be done but will take time to deliberate and really think it through. Critical issue of educating the public – toughest nut to crack.

### Action:

- Staff put together two or three taxation/fee structure models that reflect possible ways of bringing the government taxation/fee structure into one and bring before the Commission to study and decide. (September 2009)

## **Need to Have Department / Department Head Accountability**

(and performance expectations)

### Discussion:

As staff moves forward and evolves, Administrator setting staff goals based on Commission goals. Commission establishes direction and Administrator executes those directives. Need for mission statement.

### Action:

- In the process of creating a culture of success. Culture of success starts at the very top. The goal is to become a government of excellence (Oglethorpe Award/Baldrige Award recognition).
- Develop structured new employee orientation which communicates the desired culture and the service excellence expectations.
- Staff continue towards these goals.

## **Our Goals for the Water Department**

### Discussion:

Need for long range plan for Water Department. Relationship with Grovetown and expand to others – Burke County and others – water is one of our strongest assets -

### Action:

- Administrator find out who did the 2010 plan and have them or another consultant come in to talk with Commission, and appropriate staff.
- Contract with consultant to gather commission / staff feedback and create updated 10 year master infrastructure plan which aligns with transportation and other overlays.

## **"Interim" Department Managers**

### Discussion:

Need to hire the very best. Only 1 Interim Department Head but a couple of deputies. Grants/planner really needed.

### Action:

- Administrator provide staffing and hiring information in monthly reports
- Staff publish brochure to use in marketing

## **Minority Participation in Contracts – DBE**

### Discussion:

Disparity study needs to be done and incorporated into ordinance

### Action:

Once disparity study done, move to take action making minority participation a prerequisite or similar action – consider 5% local incentive

## **Georgia Power Expansion**

(How will effect us and what can we do to prepare for it)

### Discussion:

Georgia Power working with the school system to prepare operators. Huge impact on our economy.

### Action:

- All Commissioners communicate to people and let them know what is coming in order that they might prepare
- Have Commission briefing by major stakeholders (Mayor)

## **How to Better Secure State Funding**

### Discussion:

General discussion on benefit of lobbyist

### Action:

- Administrator bring recommendation package to commission for lobbyist to advocate for the City of Augusta

## **\$\$\$ From Water and Sewer to Supplement the General Fund**

### Discussion:

Can water and sewer fund supplement the general fund -

### Action:

- Administrator include Water and Sewer Fund financial report (including all transfers to the General Fund) as part of monthly update to Commission

## **Other - Code of Conduct**

### Action:

- Commissioners in attendance to rededicate to the "Code of Conduct" (*page 9 of this Summary*)

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## **Issues identified but not discussed:**

- Financial forecast over next 6 months / 12 months and our strategy for addressing any shortfalls
- Free bus rides on ozone days during the summer to help cut down on traffic and reducing the cost of transit
- Update on legislative issues with possible impact on local government - Federal and State Stimulus Package – our role in being heard
- Greater/too much concern/interest on district vs the whole
- Focus on policy rather than legal - let attorneys handle that
- Move away from emotional basis of decision making to fact based decision making
- Find a way to take policing out of Sheriff's Office – form city police department under the Commission/Mayor
- SPLOST use for streets and infrastructure – not revitalization
- Watch Amenities
- Commissioners still interfering with the day to day operations of the city





## **Augusta Commission Code of Conduct**

*(Developed at retreat on January 12, 2006  
and rededicated March 20, 2009)*

As a Mayor and Commission we all agree to strive towards maintaining the following code of conduct in our actions with each other and at Commission meetings:

- We will represent the government and the people in a positive manner at all times.
- We will respect and support the action of the Commission above our own views and lay aside our differences and move forward.
- We will respect each other as public servants elected by the people and we will communicate honestly with each other in a professional and a respectful manner keeping the public interest in mind at all times.
- We will hold confidences with each other.
- We will investigate, listen, and debate prior to taking action or making decisions.
- We will trust each other to speak and respect each other to listen.
- We will be respectful of each other's time.
- We will be prepared to discuss issues in an open, honest, and professional manner focusing on issues not personalities.
- We will stay focused on the long range direction of Augusta.

## **TOP THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW**

### **New Commissioners, Veterans & Staff**

- #10 Learning to count to 5 is better than counting to 3 (11/6)** *(You only have one vote and to make anything happen you'll need at least three. Ideally you should be trying for all five. Unanimous votes make everyone happy)*
- #9 If it's too good to be true, it probably is!**  
*(You'll be approached with all sorts of proposals and deals. Be careful not to get sucked into "opportunities" that may have serious downstream implications)*
- # 8 Mind your manners and hold your temper; practice civility in meetings and in public** *(Portray a positive image of your organization at all times - Air your dirty laundry in private - If I lose emotional control, I am NOT in control)*
- # 7 You have a board and a staff – Keep your nose out of other people's stuff and stay out of the others business\*** *(Board sets policy and direction; Staff executes and drives)*
- # 6 There's no limit to what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit** *(share the credit with staff and with commissioners)*
- # 5 When mistakes happen, problem solve, not blame** *(Assault problems, not people - Listen more than you talk - If you need help ask for it)*
- # 4 Continue learning - professional development and training** *(Be careful with new knowledge - If I don't improve, I don't just stay where I am. Which costs more?...The cost of learning or the cost of not learning?)*
- # 3 Focusing on relationships is as important as focusing on getting the work done** *(maybe even more important - Work to respect and understand the differences and perspectives of others)*
- # 2 Patience and Persistence** *(Often seemingly simple improvements take 3-5 years to accomplish – Be patient but also be persistent – people are counting for You to give up)*
- # 1 When the vote's over, the vote's over** *(Don't take losing personally, don't run to the press, and don't speak ill of your fellow board members – FIDO - remember the toes you step on today may be attached to the rear end you have to kiss tomorrow - Give only facts and things you know to the media)*